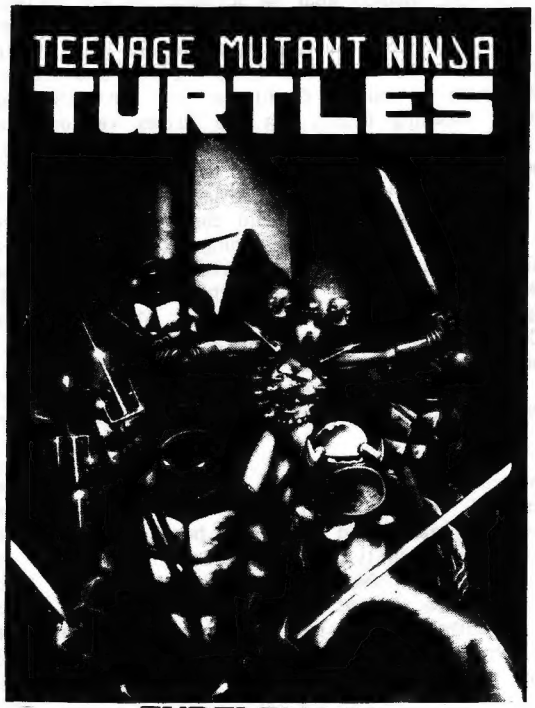
SNOW WHO?

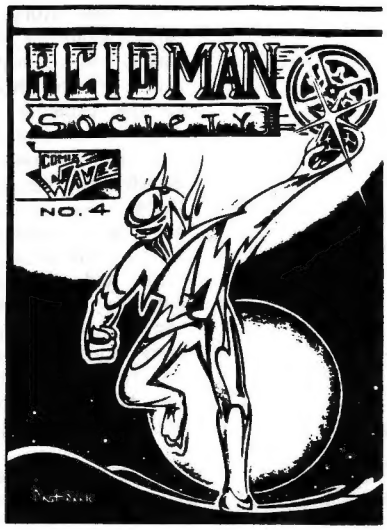
Lot of hoopla going on due to the 50th anniversary of Walt Disney's version of SNOW WHITE. This animated blockbuster premiered at the Cathay Circle Theater in Hollywood on December 21, 193". Walt and Lilly were onstage to receive the kudos from the film industry. Walt had won the race with Max Fleischer who didn't get GULLIVER'S TRAVELS in the theaters until 1939. The success of SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS kicked off the Golden Age of animation. Critics like Richard Schickel (THE DISNEY VERSION) may sneer all they like at Walt's low brow attitudes, but it was precisely this Midwestern consciousness that could come up with exactly what a Depression audience wanted to see and hear (after all, the songs sold millions of copies). Reality was unemployment, hunger, starvation, corporate theft, banks stealing the farms of small farmers all over Kansas and Oklahoma, police beating on the homeless, railroad toughs kicking the poor out of boxcars, so who better than a singing clod like Snow White to take everyone's mind off all of that for a dime? Hey, the poor could go to the movies in those days. Our whole family, two adults, and three kids, could go for 80 cents. Today's families stay home and watch t-v, because it would cost 20 bucks to get into the movies and another ten at the snack bar! Ah, Snow White. We loved her. She didn't really do anything but sing a few songs, clean house for the dwarfs, and run off with some strange prince she'd never seen before, but in those days a girl didn't have to do anything. She didn't have to have career goals, didn't have to work after school to save up money for college- Ha, college was for the well-to-do in those days, not for the mass of people just trying to stay alive. No, Snow White could reflect every girl's fantasy and wait for her prince to come.

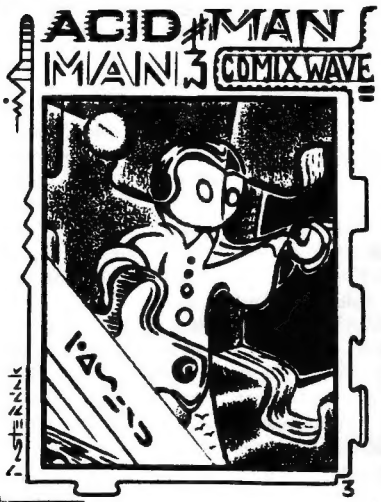
Where was she from anyway? Disney said he adapted her from Grimm, but he really used what he remembered of a movie version of Snow White he saw as a boy. If we go back to the 1810 Grimm manuscript (one of those given to Brentano), we find a story about a mother jealous of the developing beauty of her daughter, so jealous that she decides to take her into the woods and abandon her to be killed by wild animals. Too Grim for the Grimms. By the time the story went into print in 1812, Snow White (Sneewittchen or Little Snow White) has a vain stepmother Queen, her own mother has died giving birth to her, and her daddy, the King, is nowhere to be seen. Being males, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm liked the idea of evil stepmothers and witches, and a survey of their 200 tales turns up a lot of misogyny. Not at all the folklore purists they claimed to be (in Wilhelm's prefatory notes to the first two editions (1812 and 1819), The Grimms wrote and rewrote their "collected" tales over and over again, frequently changing their meaning. The old peasant woman they claimed as a source, Dorothea Viehmann, turns out to have been, not a German peasant woman at all, but the educated French daughter of an innkeeper. Sources for many of the stories turned out to be Grimm's wife and sister-in-law. Tsk! Tsk! Those interested in knowing what Frauds the Grimms really were can read the evidence in John M. Ellis' study: ONE FAIRY STORY TOO MANY: THE BROTHERS GRIMM AND THEIR TALES, University of Chicago Press, 1983. Just as the Grimms took liberties with Snow White, so did Walt Disney. What he actually did was reconstruct the story, assimilating elements from several different fairy tales. About all that is left of Grimm in the Disney version is a jealous woman out to murder her stepdaughter. Snow White's arrival and exploration of the dwarfs' house is mostly Goldilocks and her awakening to the prince's kiss is Sleeping Beauty. In the Grimm version, the prince's servants were lifting the glass coffin and one of them stumbled. The jar knocked the piece of poisoned apple out of Snow White's mouth and behold, she lived! All of the sentimental touches were Disney. We see all kinds of animals that avoid one another in nature working in harmony with Snow White in a cleaning ritual that is pure Walt. When Snow White got to the cottage in Grimm, it was nice and clean and they knew of her presence because things were disturbed. But the major change Walt made was to age Snow White, to make her a teenager. In Grimm, she's seven years old all through the story, even when she returns to life and rides off with the prince. Hey, try to imagine the film without the seven dwarfs and what would you have left? Something almost as sickening as the love plot in GULLIVER'S TRAVELS.

SNOW WHITE is the heroine, but in what way is she heroic? What does she do that is admirable? We can see that the Queen is threatened by Snow White's developing beauty and we watch her take action. She deals with the threat to her vanity, but what does Snow White do? She is nothing but a victim and she is ultimately rewarded for being a victim. What kind of heroism is that? She doesn't fight back against the attempts of her stepmother to kill her; she doesn't even learn her lesson after being suckered twice; she bites right into the apple. In Disney's film, he makes the dwarfs heroic, having them chase the witch up on a mountain in a thunderstorm. We know from previous scenes that they are afraid of her and that they have to overcome their fear to fight her, but nowhere does Snow White do anything. As a mid-Depression behavioral model, what does Snow White say to her audience? The Queen says, if something threatens you, go after it, wipe it out, fight back; she would be a good feminist in anyone's book. Snow White is the passive victim who is rewarded not for what she is but for how she looks. She is freed by the hunstman because of her beauty. What would he have done if she were ugly, killed her? Ah, but she was only in the forest because of her beauty. Ugliness was no threat to the queen. Beauty is always a threat. Snow White is saved by her beauty. the Prince would have ignored her if she were ugly or plain. The Princes of this world have no use for plain folks. And after all, aren't we supposed to think Snow White rewarded in the end when her Prince rides her off to his father's castle and marries her? Isn't that what the Iowa farm girl is supposed to think in the darkness of that theater? The waitress in Illinois pregnant with her fourth child? The dimestore clerk in Minneapolis who got all those A's in high school? The latest Miss America probably believes it. Grace Kelly's prince will come and through the tabloids we will all find out how restricted the life of a princess is. Hey, maybe Snow White WAS rewarded after all.

COMIX WAVE 57. December, 1987. **© Clay Geerdes, Box 7081, Berkeley, California. All Rights Reserved.** **Membership is $7.50 a year. 12 issues of this newsletter are included.** **This issue dedicated to the memory of Walt Disney. However critical I am of Snow White, I still love and appreciate the beauty of the animated film. C.G.**







1987

BABYFAT 57, 58, 59
ANTI-ARTIST 3, 4 (SHERIDAN)
RETROS 5,6 (JONES)
FRIED BRAINS 23,24,25,26
ONE-SHOT COMIX 2 (GREEN)
PUNGK 1-5 (SHERIDAN)
FRESH MEAT 1
SIETCH OF FLOWERS

ACID MAN 1,2 (PASTERNAK)
ALL IN YOUR MIND (ALDER)
MR TECHNIQUE 1,2 (SHERIDAN)
WEIRD FETISH
ANARCHY (GAITHER)
PAR HOLMAN'S SECRET FILES/DZ
ONE NUKE CAN RUIN YOUR DAY (PAR HOLMAN)

BUY SOME MINI-COMIX
SUPPORT COMIX WAVE

INTRODUCTORY SPECIAL
$5 FOR ONE DOZEN

BOX 7081
BERKELEY 94707

TURTLEMANIA

Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird were seen at a lot of Comicons this summer, usually surrounded by teenaged boys in search of original turtle drawings for their walls. They were profiled in a recent issue of COMIX SCENE. Their main title, TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES had a three page pull-out splash in #10 and the layouts are getting farther and farther out as you can see by the page from #11 below. Above is the cover of the next color album from First Comics. That aardvark looks a little familiar. -C.G.

COMIX PLUGOLA

Things have been a little quiet on the mini-front lately which is a sign that most of the artists are either getting paid or laid or have found other things to do with their time. Kevin Collier is back on the scene with a newsletter, COMIXTALK, wherein he interviews comix celebs. There is an exhibition of Guy Colwell's paintings at La Pena in Berkeley. The show continues through October 31. Some idiot asked Bernie Kliban if he did his best work when he was in a "psychic despair mood?" I don't know what that is, but he was hung over when he came on for his session at the San Diego Con and most of what he said was negative.* For 25¢/stamp you get Michael Carroll's parody, ROBOSTICK. POB 645, Washington, Ohio 43085.* Hey, parody is anticipated today. Routine. MAD and CRACKED movie take-offs are taken for granted. When MAD first came out in the early fifties, people laughed hysterically at SUPERDOOPERMAN and STARCHIE and MICKEY RODENT, but I see people reading it with a straight face in 7-11 these days.* Ace Backwards has another TWISTED IMAGE out. $1.73 pp from 1630 University Avenue, #26. Berkeley, CA 94703.* LUGUBRIOUS LAUGHS 7 is $1 pp from Frank Young, III, 1112 S. Magnolia Drive, V-203 Tallahassee FLA 32301, USAGI YOJIMBO is out in a book from Fantagraphics, all the early stories by Stan Sakai. This Samurai bunny is one of my favorite characters these days, beautifully drawn. Sakai has the careful hand of a dedicated cartoonist. It's his drawing and the attitudes of his characters that revive all those old Samurai stories and make them palatable.* EL VIBORA 90 is $7 from J. M. Berengueur, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain. The best sex and violence in comix today.* I finally saw a video tape of EATING RAOUL, now I know what the comic book was all about. They ate Raoul.* The new issue of FLAMING CARROT (16) has a lead story entitled "I Cloned Hitler's Feet!"* Dave Sim's CEREBUS passed 100 this year. #101 out now. A lot of people I've talked to think Dave ought to have some guest artists do covers. Hey, he's a gemini. I don't know if he could handle that.* The "psycho" drama continues in EDDY CURRENT 2 from Mad Dog Graphics.* PSYCHOBLAST really starts cooking with issue #4. First has a winner. Fine artwork by Robb Phipps and Al Vey.* I hated the new POPEYE. Expect other Segar fans will feel the same way.* The first GRENDEL cycle winds up in #12 from Comico. My congrats to the Pander brothers for a beautiful job. GRENDEL was one of the most unique comic books artistically this year.

-CLAY GEERDES